

# **Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report December 2002**

## **I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:**

### Veterinary Accreditation

- Regulations and training modules for new veterinary accreditation program continue to be developed – Work continues on the draft regulations for the veterinary accreditation program. Topics for two of the new continuing education training modules have been selected and work on their production will be contracted out to an educational institution with experience producing training aides. A survey to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the veterinary accreditation database has been drafted and is in the review process. The survey is expected to be administered in early 2003. Safeguarding Review recommendations #s 145, 146, and 147 call for revisions to the veterinary accreditation program.

### Surveillance

- Proposed rule issued on blood and tissue collections at slaughter establishments – VS issued a proposed rule in late November that would establish requirements for the collection of blood and tissue samples from livestock and poultry at slaughtering establishments. The principle changes proposed are: that persons moving livestock and poultry interstate for slaughter be required to move those animals only to slaughter establishments listed by the APHIS Administrator; and that slaughter establishments where sample collections take place grant access to personnel and provide the necessary space and equipment. Implementing this proposed rule is expected to improve surveillance programs for animal diseases. Safeguarding review recommendation #5 called for securing appropriate authority for accessing samples needed to implement a national surveillance system.

### Exclusion

- Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act regulations established in interim rule – On December 13<sup>th</sup>, VS issued an interim rule establishing, by regulation, standards and procedures governing the possession, use, and transfer of biological agents and toxins that have been determined to have the potential to pose a severe threat to both human and animal health, to animal health, to plant health, or to animal and plant products. While not specifically addressed in the Safeguarding Review recommendations, the procedures set out in the interim rule should allow greater tracking of biological agents and toxins.

- Review of proposed risk assessment methodologies – VS coordinated a review of risk analysis methods proposed by Australia for uncooked pig meat. The draft Australian document, “*Generic Import Risk Analysis for Uncooked Pig Meat*” was shared with industry reviewers and VS staff. Safeguarding Review recommendation #47 called for expanded use of risk assessment methodologies.

#### Laboratory Systems

- Field validation of rapid diagnostic tests to get underway – APHIS and ARS representatives met in December to lay the groundwork for field validation of rapid diagnostic tests being developed by ARS. The validation criteria will initially be used for the validation of the Real Time-PCR for foot-and-mouth disease virus and classical swine fever. Data collected on the Real Time – PCR used during the avian influenza outbreak will also be evaluated against the validation criteria. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations addressed the need for applied research to support response activities (#137 and 138).

#### Information Technology

- Meeting held to discuss electronic communications for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network – APHIS, AAVLD, and CDC representatives met in December to discuss electronic communication issues associated with the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. Discussion about integrating the public health and veterinary diagnostic laboratory networks also took place. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system (#s 17, 74, and 121).

## **II. Implementation activities:**

*(Note: APHIS is responding with personnel and other resources to the Exotic New Castle outbreak in California. Meetings of Safeguarding Issue Groups may be postponed over the next several months. We don't expect this interruption in safeguarding activities to deter us from ultimately meeting our safeguarding related goals and commitments.)*

The Veterinary Accreditation Issue Group held a conference call in late November to discuss the highlights of the focus group meetings and other safeguarding issues. Discussions were also held with key VS managers on draft action plans and a strategy for completing action plans.

The first set of three implementation action plans for the Surveillance Issue Group are receiving final review and will be delivered to the Implementation Committee in early January 2003. Four additional action plans should be completed by the end of January 2003.

The Exclusion Issues Group is forming two review teams to gather additional data for its assessment of the review recommendations. One team will examine VS border facilities, the second team will examine the potential for additional off shore clearance activities.

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*Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.*

